

Obituary

Margaret Joan Godley, FRCOG, DIP VEN

Maggie Godley died peacefully at home on 24 January 2000. She was found to have disseminated ovarian cancer in October 1997, and endured extensive surgery and chemotherapy with typical no-nonsense realism and fortitude.

Maggie trained initially in obstetrics and gynaecology at Liverpool and King's, where she was regarded as one of the most promising registrars. She once said that she left the specialty because she worried all night whether her post-hysterectomy patient was going to be all right. This was not a reflection on her surgical ability, but an example of her deep concern for her patients. Her career change was a loss to gynaecology, but enabled genitourinary medicine to benefit from her considerable intelligence, expertise, and powers of organisation.

Her training in genitourinary medicine was at St Thomas's Hospital, London. She mastered the specialty rapidly, and started the department's first dedicated HIV clinic. Her research was pragmatic and useful; a good example of this is a study quantifying vaginal discharge in healthy women in which she successfully persuaded women to wear tampons at different phases of their menstrual cycles, and bring them in for her to weigh. This showed that the range of discharge between women overlapped that resulting from disease.¹ She ran the clinic rota with a rod of iron, but always did more clinics than anyone else. All levels of staff loved and respected her, as did her patients.

Although she might have been expected to follow a teaching hospital career, she chose instead to go to Reading, where she hoped to enjoy a better quality of life and to keep a horse. She joined Jenny Isaacson and together they built up the clinic, attracting more HIV patients and developing a training programme. This was hard work but she successfully managed to combine it with being secretary of the MSSVD from 1989 to 1992. She was an outstanding secretary, running both the ordinary general meetings and the spring meetings. In council she was fully prepared, had every conceivable paper to hand, and always kept the meeting on course.

In 1992 her period of office ended and she joined Nicol Thin in the role of secretary to the newly formed Association for Genitourinary Medicine (AGUM). Her work in setting this up provided the blueprint for an effective regional struc-



ture that enables representation for all members. She brought to it her customary efficiency and attention to detail. This, as always, was coupled with her friendliness and the way she obviously cared for everybody, regardless of status. She continued as secretary until 1996.

She moved to Redditch in 1992 to be with her second husband, John, and to combine her medical work with cider farming. In 1995, after years of struggling with international bureaucracy, they adopted a 2 year old boy from Paraguay. Maggie was delighted to be a mother at last, and it was a source of enormous regret to her and John that her illness prevented them from finalising the adoption of a daughter from Honduras.

Maggie was always clear about where she was going and how she would get there, and was able to direct and inspire others. Her inability to control her final illness, coupled with her intimate knowledge of the condition, was deeply frustrating to her.

She did, however, organise and prepare whatever she could, and in writing this obituary we are following her instructions. On the night before she died she wrote a covering letter, confirming what she had already arranged, that we should be the authors, and enclosing her curriculum vitae and an article from the *BMJ* on how to write an obituary.

Maggie was a good and loyal friend. It seems so unfair that someone who had already given so much to her profession and to those around her should die so young.

She leaves her husband, John Levick, and their 6 year old son, Tadeo.

Margaret (Maggie) Joan Godley consultant in genitourinary medicine Reading and later in Redditch (b Yorkshire 1953; q Liverpool 1976; FRCOG), died from ovarian cancer on 24 January 2000.

CAROLINE BRADBEER
JAN WELCH

1 Godley MJ. Quantitation of vaginal discharge in healthy volunteers. *Br J Obstet Gynaecol* 1985;92:739-42.

Mohsen Shahmanesh adds:

Maggie was an exceptional person, in both the literal and fantastic sense. She was my senior registrar when I arrived at St Thomas's, with the mud of revolution still on my feet. She controlled me with her usual mixture of firmness and smiles. When she took charge of the clinic at Redditch, to be closer to home, she took charge of something that did not exist. Despite the huge distances she still had to cover daily, she gave that job the attention, and love, that only Maggie could. Her impact could be seen in the reciprocated love her colleagues gave her. Her contribution to the Midland GUM scene was in the same league. She will be missed in the region as a clear voice of wisdom. I will miss her desperately as a colleague and friend.